

# 2014 - 2018 New York City Policy Agenda



STRONG NEIGHBORHOODS

VIBRANT ECONOMY

HEALTHY NEW YORKERS

NEW YORK LEAGUE OF CONSERVATION VOTERS

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NEW YORK LEAGUE OF CONSERVATION VOTERS  
EDUCATION FUND

# *A Long-Term Vision for a More Sustainable New York City*

In Mayor Bill de Blasio's State of the City address on February 10, 2014, he recited a quote from Mayor LaGuardia: "A mayor who cannot look fifty or seventy-five years ahead is not worthy of being in City Hall."

The New York League of Conservation Voters could not agree more with this sentiment. We must accelerate the momentum around a sustainability agenda now to make our people, our neighborhoods and our economy healthier, safer and more resilient – not just now but 50 and 75 years from now.

The commitment to shared prosperity, shared success and shared responsibility in New York City can only be realized if it is anchored in policies that improve the well-being of all New Yorkers through the protection of our environmental and natural resources; policies that improve the quality of life for all communities; and investments in our city's infrastructure critical to a vibrant economy and the creation of good-paying jobs.

Working with a wide range of partners – including transportation, parks, public health, environmental justice, energy, business and real estate groups – NYLCV developed this sustainability agenda for the city's executive and legislative branches. We look forward to working with our elected leaders during the next four years to implement this sustainability agenda to improve the well-being of all New Yorkers, improve the quality of life in all New York City neighborhoods and create good, local jobs through a vibrant green economy.



Marcia Bystryn, President  
NYLCV & NYLCV Education Fund

# Healthy New Yorkers

Policies that improve the well-being of all New Yorkers through the protection of the environment and our natural resources and that provide access to basic needs.

## **Water Quality — Every New Yorker has the right to clean drinking water & waterways.**

- Action 1: Ensure New York City's drinking watershed is fully protected from the impacts of natural gas drilling.
- Action 2: Expand New York City's Green Infrastructure Plan. Incentivize alternative approaches to improving water quality for private property of all sizes and land use types, such as bioswales, green roofs and rain gardens. Expand the use of green infrastructure to address polluted runoff and promote flood mitigation citywide.
- Action 3: Invest in wetland restoration to reduce nitrogen releases into bays, creeks and waterways from nearby wastewater treatment plants.
- Action 4: Continue and expand the Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) water-conservation initiatives and work with upstate watershed communities to implement similar conservation efforts.
- Action 5: Implement a new drought management plan.
- Action 6: Seek to advance swimmable and fishable waterways where feasible.

## **Air Quality – Every New Yorker has the right to breathe clean air.**

- Action 1: Codify and expand New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's Community Air Quality Surveys and require the results to be published every year. The survey is critical to understanding how street-level pollution varies across neighborhoods in New York City and inform the public and city officials about neighborhood air quality and local air pollution concerns. The program should be expanded to include additional pollutants not currently tracked but present in vulnerable communities.
- Action 2: Accelerate the expansion of natural gas infrastructure to help buildings convert from dirty heating oils to natural gas.
- Action 3: Launch a comprehensive program to monitor indoor air quality and mold remediation in city-owned properties. Mold problems disproportionately impact low-income residents. As a result of a 2013 lawsuit settlement the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) is now required to respond to mold- and moisture-related calls within a specific time and to address the problem at the source. The city should also launch a public education program to teach the public how to avoid and mitigate mold sources at their inception.
- Action 4: Reduce transportation emissions by prioritizing mass transit and bicycling, and promote policies that encourage electric-vehicle use.

## **Healthy & Local Food – Every New Yorker has the right to access healthy, local, affordable produce.**

- **Action 1:** Every family, regardless of income, should have access to healthy, local produce. Extend Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Electronic Benefits Transfer-processing capabilities to more farmers' markets and more food providers, including Green Carts. Expand Health Bucks program to more food retailers, and increase support for Farmers Market Nutrition Program.
- **Action 2:** Establish a Wholesale Farmers Market. New York City is home to the world's largest food distribution center at Hunts Point, in the Bronx. The re-development of this market should provide the neighborhood with a new outlet for fresh fruit and vegetables provided by regional farmers.
- **Action 3:** Expand the New York City Economic Development Corporation's Food Retail Expansion to Support Health (FRESH) initiative to smaller grocery stores under 25,000 square feet, to promote and establish neighborhood grocery stores in underserved communities.
- **Action 4:** Use the power of the City's food budget to provide affordable, healthy, locally grown or produced food. Establish a short-term goal that 25 percent of the food purchased by the city is grown or produced within the local foodshed. Aggressively employ regional preference and freshness criteria in food purchasing for meal service by the NYC Department of Education.

## **Homes that offer Protection and Savings – Every New Yorker deserves the protection of a home that is energy efficient and is resilient to impacts of storms, heat waves and extended utility outages.**

- **Action 1:** Following extensive work by two task forces of the Urban Green Council, implement the remaining 53 recommendations of the New York City Green Codes Task Force and the remaining 10 recommendations of the Building Resiliency Task Force to advance the sustainability of urban buildings.
- **Action 2:** Create financing opportunities from NYC Clean Heat program (which provides resources to help buildings convert to the cleanest heating fuels) in the energy-efficiency marketplace through private/public partnerships with New York City Energy Efficiency Corporation, targeted at multi-family and single-family homes.
- **Action 3:** Promote the use of clean energy, such as geothermal, solar-energy and distributed-energy generation (which lowers environmental impacts by collecting energy from many small sources) and remove legal and permitting barriers.

# Strong Neighborhoods

Promote policies that improve the quality of life for communities in all five boroughs.

## **Parks & Recreation – Every New Yorker should live within a 10-minute walk of a park that is clean, safe and well-maintained.**

- Action 1: As is the case with other city agencies, give the NYC Parks Department a funded capital budget, particularly in communities with underserved populations. Develop and fund a 10-year capital plan for the Parks Department.
- Action 2: Baseline funding for core maintenance functions, such as landscaping, repairs, trash collection and restroom cleaning.
- Action 3: Create a new jobs program to train and transition qualified temporary workers into full-time positions as park maintenance workers.
- Action 4: Increase the transparency and efficiency of the NYC Parks Department to ensure equitable distribution of city-funded resources. Determine maintenance costs for each park property.
- Action 5: Restrict and regulate the privatization of parkland. As per New York State law, replace parkland acre-for-acre with new, proximate parkland of comparable size and with comparable amenities.

## **Waterfront Access – Every New Yorker should have safe and public access to clean rivers, creeks, bays, harbors and other waterways.**

- Action 1: Expand public access to the waterfront on public and private property.
- Action 2: Construct public “town docks” in all boroughs and, where feasible, provide connections between waterfronts, encouraging the public to take waterfront walks, fish from the pier and moor boats.
- Action 3: Address funding and permitting challenges to help small waterfront businesses (marinas, restaurants, maritime support businesses, etc.).
- Action 4: Designate one single agency to be responsible for ensuring the waterfront is used to its fullest potential, promoting and coordinating waterfront events, schools, sailing programs, or historic and excursion vessels.

## **Transportation – Every New Yorker should have safe, affordable, reliable and efficient transportation options in their daily life.**

- Action 1: Implement the Vision Zero plan to eliminate traffic fatalities by 2024 by bringing pedestrian and cycling safety improvements to 50 corridors a year, advocating for city control of speed limits, ramping up reckless driving enforcement, and addressing unsafe deteriorated street-pavement conditions.
- Action 2: Build 20 new Select Bus Service routes to serve the millions of New Yorkers underserved by the subway system.
- Action 3: Expand bike share programs and the network of protected bike lanes.

- Action 4: Require employers of 20 or more to offer pre-tax transit benefits to employees.
- Action 5: Fund designated state-of-good-repair projects within the MTA capital program and fund system expansion projects within the city.
- Action 6: Expand and upgrade the ferry system to all five boroughs.

**Resiliency & Recovery – All communities should be better able to handle extreme weather events: rainfall, snow, storm surges, heavy wind, heat and utility failures.**

- Action 1: Modify building and zoning codes to strengthen buildings in vulnerable areas against flooding. Implement the remaining 10 recommendations from Building Resiliency Task Force to advance the sustainability of urban buildings.
- Action 2: Pursue adaptation strategies and to protect undeveloped coastal and riverine properties in flood zones. Restore natural shorelines and recreate wetland barriers (accounting for sea level rise) to protect the city and our infrastructure from sea-level rise and extreme weather events. Work with the state and federal governments to encourage buyouts by willing sellers on tenuous, eroding barrier beaches.
- Action 3: Replace NYCHA's flooded energy systems with greener, cheaper, more resilient power. Upgrade NYCHA buildings to combined heat and power (cogeneration) which can cut energy costs by 30-50 percent and work with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to redirect savings to fund NYCHA repairs.
- Action 4: Use Community Development Block Grant and state funds to help communities move toward cogeneration.

## Vibrant Economy

Promote policies that foster green job creation while protecting New Yorkers from the effects of climate change.

**Infrastructure – Make critical investments to maintain New York City's competitive edge in the global economy while creating local jobs.**

- Action 1: Pursue renewable-energy projects and policies, e.g., develop solar generation on city-owned properties, harness East River tidal energy, and update codes that inhibit the installation of renewable energy.
- Action 2: Demonstrate leadership within New York City by constructing 50 Net-Zero, Passive House, LEED Platinum, or A+ Building Energy Quotient in city buildings by 2018.

- Action 3: Implement a five-year capital program to repave and reconstruct the city's streets to upgrade conditions.
- Action 4: Help advance completion of a new Moynihan Station; make progress on the Amtrak Gateway project; add West Side Access for Metro North trains; and improve conditions at Penn Station, which will require funding, zoning and infrastructure assistance from the city.
- Action 5: Grow staffing support of the Office of Environmental Remediation to address brownfield issues and keep it within the Mayor's Office.
- Action 6: Increase investment in the city's water main and sewer main distribution network.
- Action 7: Continue progress toward completing Water Tunnel No. 3 and finalize plans for the rehabilitation of Tunnels No. 1 and 2.

**Solid Waste – Effective solid waste management will reduce environmental burdens in overburdened communities, save the city millions of dollars in exporting waste and generate quality green jobs.**

- Action 1: Fully implement the 2006 Solid Waste Management Plan to establish a cost-effective, reliable and environmentally sound system for managing the City's waste over the next 20 years.
- Action 2: Implement a more robust recycling and waste prevention program to double the city's residential and institutional waste diversion from landfills from 15 percent to 30 percent by 2017.
- Action 3: Implement a "pay-to-throw" program for institutional waste generators serviced by the NYC Department of Sanitation, charging for trash collection based on the amount being thrown away.
- Action 4: Implement a program to increase the recycling of New York City's commercial waste while creating good jobs for New Yorkers.
- Action 5: Continue to explore new and emerging technologies to manage the city's solid waste.

**Green Workforce Development – Provide training for New Yorkers to help green the city and support its resiliency.**

- Action 1: Establish a New York City Green Corps to connect disadvantaged youth with training and temporary jobs in city departments that implement and maintain environmental and sustainability projects throughout the city.
- Action 2: Integrate green skills into existing workforce development programs. Training in ways to reduce energy consumption and costs should be integrated in all schools, apprenticeship and training programs.



*The New York League of Conservation Voters (NYLCV) is the only statewide environmental organization in New York that fights for clean water, clean air, renewable energy and open space through political action. **Get involved at [www.nylcv.org](http://www.nylcv.org).***



*The mission of the New York League of Conservation Voters Education Fund (NYLCVEF) is to educate, engage and empower New Yorkers to be effective advocates on behalf of the environment — from clean energy and funding for parks, to solid waste and green buildings. **Learn more at [www.nylcvef.org](http://www.nylcvef.org).***